

REMARKS

Amendments

Claim 10 is amended to correct a punctuation error. New claims 20-23 are directed to aspects of applicants' invention. See, e.g., page 3, lines 31-36, page 4, lines 30-36, and page 6, lines 21-24.

Allowable Subject Matter

Applicants gratefully acknowledge the Examiner's indication that claims 9-11, 13-16 and 19 are allowed.

Rejection Under 35 USC §112, Second Paragraph

Claims 1-7, 17 and 18 are rejected on grounds of alleged indefiniteness due to the term "optionally." This rejection is traversed.

Contrary to the assertion in the rejection, the term "optionally" is not indefinite, as clearly indicated in MPEP 2173.05(h), section III, entitled "Optionally." See, also, *Ex parte Cordova*, 10 USPQ2d 1949 (POBA 1989) and *Ex parte Wu*, 10 USPQ2d 2031 (POBA 1989). Thus, withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested. In any event, the allegation of indefiniteness is an insufficient basis to withhold examination of claim on the merits.

Rejection Under 35 USC §103(a)

Claim 8 is rejected as allegedly being obvious in view of Narumiya (US '273). This rejection is also traversed.

Contrary to the assertion in the rejection, US '273 fails to disclose or suggest applicants' claimed invention. US '273 discloses a gas-permeable thermal insulator which comprises a porous ceramic body of three-dimensional reticulate structure having an average pore diameter of 0.2-10 mm, i.e., 0.2-10 millimeters, not microns. See, e.g., column 1, lines 59-64. The rejection refers to Tables 1 and 2 at columns 10-11. The average pore diameter in the nine examples presented in these tables ranges from 0.5mm to 4.1mm.

Thus, US '273 fails to disclose a reaction tube in accordance with applicants' invention. Moreover, US '273 provides no suggestion that would lead one of ordinary skill in

the art to modify the gas-permeable thermal insulator so as to arrive at an embodiment in accordance with applicants' invention. Withdrawal of the rejection under 35 USC §103(a) is respectfully requested.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any fees associated with this response or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 13-3402.

Respectfully submitted,



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Filed: March 29, 2004